

Wasatch County looks at law enforcement consolidation

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Heber City — Wasatch County Commission Chairman Moroni Bezzant brought up the subject of consolidating law enforcement and public works departments during last week's meeting of the Council of Governments (COG).

He said consolidating some services could save tax money and that the county jail needs to be expanded or replaced, which might be more practical done as a cooperative effort.

Heber City Councilman Wayne Clegg agreed there was merit to the idea of consolidating law enforcement but only if services are improved or the costs are reduced. He said the last time the possibility of consolidating law enforcement was considered, the cost to the city was more than it budgeted for its own police department.

He also was concerned about the county commission having "all the

say" in consolidated departments. He pointed out the county public works director, who is appointed by the commission, would control that department and the sheriff would control all law enforcement. He said the commission ultimately has control over the sheriff's department because it "holds the purse strings."

He said the other entities in the county should have an equal say in the operations of consolidated services.

Commissioner LaRen Provost suggested the departments could be governed by boards with representation from the cities as well as the county, similar to the way the sewer and fire districts are governed.

Heber is the only city in the county with its own police department. Midway has a contract with the sheriff's dept. to patrol and handle other police matters, which Mayor Reed Bezzant says is work-

ing very well.

Heber City Councilman Lincoln Rasband suggested having the Mountainlands Association of Government conduct a survey and recommend how consolidated departments might be set up. Provost said Heber should take the lead in the survey.

In other business, all the county and city officials expressed support for a proposal to start a bus service to Park City but they said none of their budgets had money to spare to help the project get started.

Mary Jo Coleman, an advocate for handicapped people, and Kay Simmons, transitional coordinator for Wasatch County and Park City Schools, once again reviewed their proposal for a bus service to Park City, which they had already presented to the county commission and city councils. Since the service would benefit people from all over the Heber Valley, they

were invited to present the idea at the COG meeting where it could be discussed by representatives from all the governments.

Coleman and Simmons said they need \$8,400 for the first month of operation, which would be repaid from ticket sales. However, city budgets are based on fiscal years and the councilmen said they wouldn't be able to help until they put together their new budgets next June. The County has begun to work on its 1991 budget, but the commissioners said they wouldn't know for a few more weeks if any money might be available this year.

The problem is that the bus is needed before the holiday ski season begins, particularly for handicapped people who have no other way to get there. The bus would make four round trips a day, for day and swing shifts, seven days a week.

Coleman and Simmons were ad-

vised to approach local service organizations to see if they might help.

The bus, with a driver, would be leased from Park City Transport, a privately owned company. It would be the same bus used by The Homestead as a shuttle to Park City. Some of the COG members expressed concern about government funds being used to subsidize private business.

Provost reported he had prepared a draft of an ordinance for increasing building permit fees to include impact fees. The additional money will be set aside for emergency services as a way for new residents and business owners to buy into existing emergency systems.

Although new construction in areas that are already developed are not expected to severely impact emergency services, additional equipment, facilities and personnel will be required for new

developments, like those planned for the Jordanelle area. Provost suggested the impact fees as the fairest way to pay for whatever will be required until the additional property taxes are collected to cover ongoing services.

Provost reported that the County Solid Waste District had to be subsidized by the county when it started up. However, he said it has been breaking even since early this year. He said most user fees are collected on time.

He said the lawsuit brought against the county by Timberlakes still has not been settled. Timberlakes homeowners object to having to deposit their garbage in commercial containers at the entrance of the development but being charged the same as other county residents who have individual containers. They also object to having to pay garbage collection fees year-round, even though most of their homes are second residences which they only occupy part of the year.

Provost said during the county's last meeting with the homeowners and their attorney, they offered to pay \$2 per household per month for garbage collection, compared to \$7.60 plus payments on the cannisters paid by other residents. He said the proposal was not acceptable.

He said he was concerned that if the matter goes to court and the county loses, it will be very costly for the county because it would pay Timberlakes' attorney fees as well as abide by the decision of the court on the collection fees.

"But which other way can we go?" he asked. He said the district is "out on a limb" and can't pick up people's trash "for just two bucks."

Sheriff Settles Dispute Over Families in Official Vehicles

Wasatch County deputies' families will no longer be allowed to ride in their official vehicles except on rare occasions and with special permission from the sheriff. That's the final word, according to Sheriff Mike Spanos, and ends a debate on the issue that has been pending for several months. The previous sheriff, Edd Thacker, and some of the deputies defended the policy of allowing family members to ride with the deputies. They said the policy made it possible for officers to respond to situations in which they were needed, with radios and the other equipment they might need, even when they weren't on duty. They said they would have their families leave their vehicles if they were needed in situations that could be dangerous. They also said that by being able to have their families in their cars they would be driving the vehicles more, providing more visibility and possibly serving as a deterrent.

However, the county commissioners objected to the policy. They said they had received many complaints from citizens about deputies using their official vehicles for private errands and outings. They were also concerned that the county could be held liable if private citizens were injured while in a county vehicle.

Spanos said the need for off-duty officers to handle emergencies or law enforcement problems when

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they are with their families doesn't arise often enough to justify the old policy.

He said the new policy also will assure "that we don't misuse the public's money. If enough of the public had some heartache with [the old policy], I think maybe we're answering the call for them. They're really who we work for. But I think it's just a good policy, in and of itself, [to prevent] an event in which something could happen when there was somebody in the car."

Under the new policy, only certified officers will be allowed to travel in official law enforcement vehicles. Spanos pointed out that citizens still may see people in civilian clothing riding in the vehicles, but that doesn't mean the policy is being violated. For instance, deputies are not always in uniform, even when they are on official business, and officers from other jurisdictions who are not wearing uniforms may travel in the deputies' cars. Individuals under arrest or being transported for other official reasons may also be transported in

the vehicles. Spanos said reserve officers and Search and Rescue volunteers, many of whom are working toward police certification, often ride along with on-duty deputies, and that will continue to be allowed. But they must have the sheriff's approval and will be required to sign waivers releasing the county from any liability.

Some other exceptions also may be made. For instance Spanos said he may allow a family member to travel with a deputy in certain situations that are connected with official business. But he said such occasions will be rare and that all civilian passengers will be required to sign waivers.

He said deputies did not object when he told them about the policy.

Commission Chairman Moroni Besendorfer said he was extremely pleased with Spanos's decision and to have the matter settled. He said it was the only issue that remained pending after the county's entire procedure and policy manual was reviewed and updated.

Deputies Head Off Local Gang Fight

4-10-71

The Wasatch County Sheriff's Office managed to get a gang fight cancelled before it got started last Thursday night, except for one juvenile who was injured, and deputies hope their efforts to avoid future confrontations between the two Wasatch High School gangs are successful.

According to Deputy Steve Ridge, two groups of male students, with about eight members in each, scheduled the fight at the Chalet in Wasatch Mountain State Park. He said one group, called the "Cowboys", is made up of kids that dress like cowboys, ride horses and drive pickup trucks. The other, he said, is called the "Skaters" or "Stoners", and the members "wear their hair a little longer and dress a little more casual."

He said a "teasing incident" set the two groups against each other until they finally set up the fight.

But after an anonymous tip about the fight, deputies told one member of the "Cowboys" not to show up, and he passed the information on to his friends. However, the "Stoners" did show up, as well as one "Cowboy", who apparently didn't get the message, and he was allegedly assaulted, Ridge said. But the victim apparently did not receive serious injuries and was not hospitalized.

Sgt. Lance Gardner watched the Chalet during the time the fight was to take place, but he said he didn't see any activity in the area.

Ridge said he and school officials talked to members of each group on Friday, to try to get them to diffuse the situation and he hopes the matter is settled.

However, he warned, "Any further incidents will not be treated as lightly as this one. They've had their warning."